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THE PASSING OF OUR HISTORIC STREET NAMES.

BY J. M. GUINN.

But few, if indeed any, of the original pueblo street names remain. When Governor Felipe de Neve established the old plaza of Los Angeles in 1781, and designated two streets leading out from it toward each of the four points of the compass, or rather halfway between the cardinal points, for his plaza was cut on the bias, he gave them no names. It was not necessary to name them. They were merely openings in the line of house lots that fronted on the plaza. Beyond that line they were not designated. They opened into space unlimited and the traveler was at liberty to wander as he wished, unhampered by fence or farm.

Forty years later, when the old plaza was vacated for the present one, the old streets were gradually abandoned or changed to suit the modern trend of travel. In my researches in the old Spanish archives I have found mention of but one street that possibly might have been a survivor of De Neve's *calles*. It was the Calle Real, or Main Street. It ran north and south through the old plaza's boundaries and probably followed the trail made by Portola's expedition in 1769. The travel between the Mission San Gabriel and the Pueblo of Los Angeles for many years after the founding of the latter followed the Portola trail, which passed up the valley between the hills and the river about on the present line of San Fernando street. It crossed the river just below where now is the cement bridge and intersected what is now the Mission road, near East Lake Park. The site of East Los Angeles then was an uninhabited plain and the *caballero* was at liberty to make road where he pleased.

San Fernando street (formerly Upper Main), North Main (once Alegro or Junction street) and North Spring street, in the early years of the last century *Calle Caridad* (Charity street), are the oldest streets of the city. These long antedate the modern Camino Real marked by bells that never ring and that foot of Mission *padre* never trod.

All the streets south of First street to Twelfth street and all west of Main street to Figueroa, date their existence from the Ord Survey, made in 1849. They were christened both in English and Spanish. The Spanish names long since ceased to be used and are

forgotten. Forten, Caridad and Chapules have been changed to Broadway, Grand avenue and Figueroa.

In a monograph published in the Annual of 1895, Vol. III, of the Historical Society's publications, entitled "The Plan of Old Los Angeles and the Story of Its Highways and Byways," I give the history of many of the old streets and the changes in name. In the present paper I shall confine myself to recent changes and some remarks on street nomenclature.

The iconoclastic American did not efface all the historic street names from our city map. The Native Californian under Mexican domination seemed imbued with the spirit of change.

For instance, long before the Gringo came, Los Angeles street was known as Calle Zanja (Ditch street), next as Calle de Las Vinas (Street of Vineyards), later as Calle de Las Huertas (Street of Orchards), and before the Ord Survey as the Calle Principal (Main street). It was the principal street leading south to the *embarcadero* of San Pedro.

Our modern municipal statesmen seem to harbor hatred to Spanish street names—recently nearly all of Buena Vista street fell before the advance of North Broadway; Requena street gave up to East Market street and what was once Corta street and a portion of Alta street were absorbed into Sunset Boulevard.

These were not the original names of these streets. The fitness of the first name has been lost in the changes and the history forgotten in the transitions.

The Calle Eternidad (Eternity street) extended from the foot of the hill where the Calle Alta intersected it to the Campo Santo, or Calvary Cemetery. The name was fitting. For half a century the dead of the pueblo were carried over it to their eternal rest.

The name was changed to Buena Vista street and it was extended to the river. Forten street (Fort street), changed to North Broadway, was tunneled through the hill into Buena Vista street. Then the real estate promoter, over the protest of the pioneer, petitioned for a change of name. Buena Vista street carried over the river to an intersection with Downey avenue, and the two streets then became North Broadway, the latter in direct violation of the points of the compass, for Downey avenue that was, runs due east instead of north. Downey, once governor of the state, a pioneer and an honored citizen, by a reversal of the points of the compass has been relegated to oblivion in our street nomenclature.

East Market street of today was originally Calle Libertad (Liberty street). Down by the river between what is now Aliso and First streets, for centuries before the Spaniard came, stood the Indian village of Yangna. After the establishment of the Mission

San Gabriel the Indians of the valley, *nolens volens*, were gathered into its fold. After the founding of the Pueblo of Los Angeles some of them were allowed to return to the village as laborers for the colonists.

When the missions were secularized the neophytes were left free to go where they pleased. Some of them joined their untamed relatives in the mountains and became expert horse thieves. The great majority of them flocked to the towns and became the pariahs of the social system. Their town, then known as the pueblito (little town), was the plague spot of the body politic. It grew worse after the American occupation. The drunken orgies of the Indians on Saturday nights were demoniacal and led to many arrests. The jail at that time was on the block bounded by North Spring, New High and Franklin streets, the latter street then known as Jail street. The Indian, when he had served out his sentence and was liberated, took his way back to his old haunts over the Calle Libertad. Dissipation, Drunkenness and Debauchery—civilization's gifts to the savage—destroyed the Indian and his village.

Calle Libertad became Requena street in honor of Manuel Requena, a municipal statesman of the old régime, who filled the offices of Alcalde and Regidor under Mexican rule and Councilman under American. He was a large landowner on the line of the street and a most estimable gentleman.

The meaningless name of East Market street was recently conferred upon it to connect it with West Market—a little tag of a street extending from Main to Spring street—another exemplification of the caudle appendage wagging the canine.

That portion of Marchessault street which was recently absorbed by Sunset Boulevard early in its history bore the name of Calle Iglesias, or Church street, so named from its proximity to the Church of Our Lady of the Angels; then it became Pan, or Bread street; next it expanded into Panaderia (Bakery) street. When Ord made his "plano" of the city it was known as Corta (Short) street—it was only a block long. The street on the north side of the plaza, upon which some of the residences of the pueblo aristocracy fronted, was known as Calle Trinidad (Trinity) street, and was one of a trio of streets that united to form Main street.

Its name was changed to honor the memory of Marchessault, who, like Whittington of feline fame, was three times Mayor, not of "London town," but of Los Angeles. He cut his official term and his span of life short by suicide. The name crossed Main street and fastened upon Calle Corta.

Temple street fifty years ago, when it ended at the First Protestant Church, which stood on the corner of New High street where the

stone lions now guard the steps up to the court house, was known as Salvation street. It was a time of "spiritual darkness" in the city and the name was probably given in derision. Branching off to the right of that street there was a deep gulch or cañon that crossed diagonally the blocks between Temple street and the gate of the City Cemetery.

It was called the Cañon de Los Muertos, the cañon of the dead. The road to the cemetery in early days before the streets were graded led up this cañon.

There is a tradition, true or false I know not, that tells us the Vigilantes' victims who expiated their crimes on the gallows tree that stood on Fort Hill were buried unshrived, uncoffined and unknelled in the bottom of this cañon. The cañon was filled years ago, when the hill was cut down and the streets graded; all traces of it have disappeared.

If the tradition is true, then the bones of the bad men of bygone days rest more securely and more quietly than those of their virtuous contemporaries who were buried with elaborate obsequies in the old City Cemetery. The graves of many of these have given up their dead and the bodies have been moved to other resting places.

The nomenclature of our streets is polyglot. Many languages have been drawn upon for our street names. The Spanish names are in their decadence. Some of the names of our streets and avenues are mongrels—half and half—a mixture of English and Spanish; for instance, Bonsallo avenue, from an English proper name, Bonsal, is transformed into a Spanish-sounding word by annexing a suffix to it.

The use of the two languages in our street nomenclature has resulted in duplication of names. We have Estrella street in Spanish, and a few blocks away Star street in English; Towne avenue in one part of the city and Pueblo in another. Annexation of outside territory has increased our duplicates. We have at the present time no less than three Mountain Views in English and two Monte Vistas in Spanish.

The Eastern Indian has contributed several street names to our directory, such as Mohawk, Manitou, Calumet, Wabash and Arapahoe, but our California *Lo* has given us only one lone name—Cahuenga.

The odd, eccentric names that once characterized some of our streets have long since been relegated to oblivion.

Away back in the early years of American occupation, Soda Water street intersected Lemon street near the end of Moran's lane, now East Ninth street. These were the days of strenuous drinking. The

popular beverage then was aguardiente, a fiery, untamed liquid possessed of the bad qualities of all intoxicants. Aguardiente is a twin brother to mescal, the national beverage of Mexico—one drink of which will make a man hate all his relatives. It is said to contain fifty fights to the quart, a pronunciamento to the gallon and a revolution to the barrel. In those strenuous days the man whose depraved taste craved such mild drinks as soda pop or lemonade could not indulge in the presence of gentlemen, "suh!" He must go away back and sit down where Soda Water street squeezed into Lemon street.

Deepwater street was a short, narrow street on a sloping hillside. How it got into deep water I do not know. Some joker, probably, christened it by the rule of contraries. Water never accumulated on it, but its dryness brought disgrace upon it instead of honor.

Paradise street once ran parallel with Adams street, but Eve's street never materialized. It is probable they both left Eden by Adams street. Lovers' Lane was a shady street that in early times meandered northward toward the river from what are now the suburbs of Chinatown. The lumber yards, the machine shops and the "Heathen Chinees" encroached upon it and the lovers ceased their trysts in it. Its name was changed to Date street, but the dates have long since gone to join the lovers.

As an illustration of how sentimentalism in street naming may degenerate into common-place, the streets in the old City Cemetery back of the Los Angeles High School are a good example.

The surveyor who platted it, more than fifty years ago, seemed to have been impressed with the idea that he must give its narrow lanes pathetic names in harmony with the solemn use to which the grounds were dedicated. All the passageways were named avenues, although only one of them was wide enough for a carriage driveway. The main driveway was named the Avenue of Eternity. On the north of this were the Avenues of Hope and Tears; on the south the Avenues of Truth and Love. The cross streets running north and south were the Avenues of Prayer, Faith and Rest. The utilitarianism of the age has played sad havoc with the sentimentalism of that surveyor. The Avenue of Eternity, which should have no end, now ends in the boys' gymnasium, while the building itself sets squarely across the Avenue of Prayer. The Avenue of Love collides with the cook's galley of the cafeteria; the Avenue of Tears has been wiped out by the tennis court, while the Avenues of Truth, Faith and Rest have been taken into the athletic field.

A few years ago I was appointed by a Mayor of our city a member of a street-naming commission. The members of that commission labored industriously to bring order out of the chaos of

street names caused by the ambition of real estate promoters to immortalize themselves, their sisters, their cousins and their aunts in our street nomenclature.

To give local coloring and some historic significance to our city highways we injected into the mass of names imported from eastern cities and towns a few smooth-syllabled native Californian names of Spanish origin, but the dwellers on the streets whose names were changed would have none of *that*. They petitioned the City Council for a change from the names given, and that complaisant body granted their request. The vowelily patronymic of a Castilian hero gave way to Hobson of kissing fame, and the liquid flowing cognomen of one of the founders of the city was wiped out by Arapahoe, a lingual monstrosity imported from Denver.

A street in the southwestern part of the city bore a compound name, "Georgia Bell." The commission changed it to a single name and thereby incurred the wrath of Georgia's husband. He employed an attorney to undo our work and to demolish the commission itself.

The attorney in his plea before the City Council said, "I will show you some of the work of this delectable commission. The members wanted no compound names, so they wiped the name of a pioneer lady off the map and deprived her of the honor bestowed upon her, but right over here in the northwestern part of the city they gave a street a double name. They called a street 'Michael Toreno,' after some obscure Irish friend of theirs whom nobody but this learned commission knows." The street he referred to was Micheltorena, named for the last Mexican-born governor of California—a name it had borne for forty years before our commission was created, indeed before some of its members were born. This attorney, although he had lived a number of years in the city and was then an aspirant for a judgeship, had never heard of Governor Micheltorena, nor did he know a Castilian patronymic from a Milesian cognomen—and there are more of his kind in the limelight of politics.